

# The English Leaflet

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## WELCOME TO SPRINGFIELD!

Springfield extends a cordial invitation to all teachers to attend the meeting of the New England Association of Teachers of English on December 9th. An excellent program has been arranged, including addresses by Mr. Charles Swain Thomas, Lecturer on the Teaching of English, Harvard University, and by Professor John Erskine of Columbia University. A third feature of the program will be the demonstration classes, showing the use of the "group method" in presenting different kinds of English work to pupils of junior high school age. This will be followed by reports and by a brief discussion of the method by Professor Colin A. Scott of Mount Holyoke College.

The morning program will begin at 10.30 and the afternoon program will close at 3.30 so that teachers who can come to Springfield for the day only will have ample time in which to make the trip to and from the city. As the noon interval will necessarily be short, luncheon will be served in the building in which the program is given, the High School of Commerce, for the convenience of both the visiting and the home teachers.

Many teachers of New England have never visited Springfield. The suggestion is offered, therefore, that teachers come to the city on Friday, the 8th, for they will find much of interest in addition to the regular program of the Association. On Friday and Saturday evenings, December 8th and 9th, the class in Drama of the High School of Commerce will present two short plays: "Neighbors," by Zona Gale; and "The Romancers," by Rostand. On Friday evening also, Dr. James Harvey Robinson, formerly of Columbia University, will lecture in the Central High School on "The Mind in the Making."

The city itself has many attractions: The Art Museum; the Museum of Natural Science; the City Library; the Museum of the Springfield Armory, which contains one of the original racks of rifles that inspired Longfellow's poem, "The Arsenal at Springfield"; and the Campanile Tower, from the top of which one can get an excellent view of the city and of the Connecticut Valley.

The teachers of English in Springfield are proud to claim one hundred per cent membership in the Association, and they issue a friendly challenge to all other school systems in New England to equal this record of professional interest. Let us express our appreciation of the work of our Association by joining and attending its meetings. Springfield will give you a warm welcome.

C. A. COCKAYNE,  
Chairman of Local Committee.

## AN INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE IN ENGLISH

MRS. LOUIS B. PULCIFER

Concord (Mass.) High School

The object of this paper is to tell, as far as possible in the words of the children themselves, what some pupils in a rural high school have been doing to fit themselves for citizenship of the world. The account might have been written by the teacher of history, who engineered much of the work; yet it is intended primarily to show that one of the best ways of interesting the young in writing and speaking English is to give them a stake in the issue.

The project described grew out of the conviction that all English teachers—and pupils—hate preparing for college. It seems much more worth while to prepare for life. Life seems much more real than college. Why teach English, anyway? Why not teach life—or live it—and allow English to help along if it can? Perhaps that is what we have been doing when we have dared to forget college for a day a week in our high school. Anyway it came about in 1914-15, when the world began to be an absorbing place to live in, that we did forget college examinations in this fashion, and got to exchanging information and opinions on the war in what we were supposed to call "oral themes."

As the war went on, and we grew more nationally aware of this great Thing that was sucking us all into it, our themes grew less and less to have any touch of unreality. Often they were so valuable that we could not keep them to ourselves and had to pass them on to other classes. Then somebody—it was 1918 by this time—conceived the idea of a general assembly of the school once a month, when all the valuable material which had accumulated should be passed on by the seniors to the lower classes. The idea took at once. If there had been no such organization in existence as a forum, we should have invented it at that moment. Within a week the forum had a constitution with a wing broad enough to cover a dying debating club, to promote the study of vocations, and to take care of such important national dates as Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays.

One girl in the class that originated the forum had declared shortly before that she had been bored by high school from the beginning. The study of world affairs was the first matter that had appealed to her in the least. She was one of the first speakers at the forum; her subject was the value of a



liberal education. (The Government was just then sending out a plea for higher education.) She convinced herself by her own arguments that college was worth while, and has since taken her degree.

The next year the schedule of the school provided for a period each Friday for school organization, and this forum claimed the hour. It was the psychological moment for a forum, as a large group of citizens in the town had elected to pursue, under expert guidance, for several evenings each week, a course of intensive study of international problems. Various specialists gave lectures, and discussions followed. In the hope of broadcasting the splendid material offered by this course, a delegation of the committee who were fathering the intensive study weeks, visited the high school to see what plan could be made for sharing the lectures with our students. The forum was glad to get the benefit of such study, and for some time the lectures were repeated in the school.

The intensive study weeks were followed by a weekly community gathering, sometimes addressed by a speaker, sometimes given over to discussion. Little by little, those who had come for the lecture thrill dropped out, and only a few regular attendants still came for study and discussion. The citizens grew fewer and fewer, but children of the high school—ten or fifteen of them—and a few teachers continued their attendance; at last, however, only those who came for real work remained—a row or two of earnest boys, a little group of earnest girls, a few rare citizens who were willing to sacrifice one precious evening a week to the service of young people eager to learn about their world. It was a strange privilege for some of these lads and lassies, one that must give their lives forever a different turn, to sit at the round table and chat familiarly with men socially and intellectually from another world than theirs. The meeting had the ease and intimacy of talk about a sitting-room fire, and nobody was afraid to ask questions. I believe that the leaders themselves gained as much from these meetings as the children did. One of them greeting me a few days ago, said, "Those were wonderful days! I often wish we were back in them again—the days when we all got together." Now we are all running around in our individual squirrel cages again.

It had been planned to hold the forum meeting once a month, but the demand on the part of the students has been such that meetings have been for the most part fortnightly. The attendance is voluntary, limited if necessary, by the size

of the assembly room, to the senior and junior classes, but pupils of the two lower classes who show real interest in public affairs are always permitted to attend, to the capacity of the hall. The audiences are always good, and it frequently happens that there is not room for all who wish to hear the speakers.

The first year, as I have said, the forum followed the lead of the Concord Civic Forum; the second year the Civic Forum lapsed for lack of funds, but Mr. Henry Rolfe, the originator of the "Intensive Weeks" plan for the study of international matters, remained our great aid, and largely planned our work during the last term of the school year. I will let one of the boys who gave a talk (not the usual "oration") to his fellow students and the townspeople on class day tell of our activities.

"I am going to express to you, not in an oration but in a simple talk, the desires of the rising generation; how it is trying to satisfy them; and how it expects more help in realizing them.

What we want is a thorough understanding of the world at large. We are trying to attain this understanding through several agencies, one of which is the Concord High School Forum.

This organization, started two years ago, has been supported this year by the class of 1920 for the purpose of piercing the dense fog of 'preoccupation with ourselves,' as Mr. Wells calls it. We opened the Forum with a discussion of the Versailles Treaty. Members of the student body gave reports on material found in such sources as the newspapers, the magazines, and the Civic Forum of Concord. Able help in the treaty was given by Rev. Smith Owen Dexter. The Forum does not try to reach a definite decision on each topic, but instead tries to gather important news on both sides.

"In our study of the Versailles Treaty we discovered that the subject matter in the newspapers was not reliable. Walter Lippman's articles on 'Liberty and the News,' as published in the Atlantic Monthly, gave us some idea of how difficult it is to get facts on which to base opinion, and has made us skeptical about taking our opinions from our family paper. While the country was agitated over the presence of revolutionary agents, we took time to consider the rights and limitations of free speech, following a study plan outlined by Professor Chafee of the Harvard Law School. Rev. Loren Macdonald gave us a wise and sensible talk on the subject.

"Our attention was next turned to affairs in Mexico, and members made reports on such topics as 'Mexico and Its Relation to the United States.' A resumé of a speech of Mr. John F. Moors before the Civic Forum was very helpful.

"The League of Nations came next, and much time was spent in trying to grasp the problems and promises which it presents. Mr. Theron Damon gave us a clear analysis of the situation in Asia Minor which helped us to a better understanding of that



puzzling section of the world. Under the guidance of Mr. Rolfe, Mrs. Pulcifer and Miss Scott, the Forum dramatized as exactly as possible, the first meeting of the Council of the League of Nations.

"The topic of the last term has been how to avert wars. To answer this question, we began to study, by means of syllabi prepared by Mr. Rolfe, the conditions that bring on wars. Mr. Rolfe took as a specific example of an exploited country, Egypt, and showed how that much suffering nation had been put at the mercy of outside powers. The fascinating story of Egypt has not been finished and remains for our successors to pick up again.

"One of the most helpful agencies in our study of world affairs is what might be called 'Round Table Groups.' These groups are meetings of students who wish to think more deeply regarding world conditions. At these meetings Mr. Barrett, Mr. French, Mr. Pulcifer, besides others mentioned in connection with the Forum, have helped and guided our work. I understand that in England these 'Round Table Groups' are doing valuable work and are supervised by young men of intellect and leisure who are free from political prejudice and are disinterestedly concerned in discovering how best the welfare of the world can be served.

"The study of history, Greek, Roman, English, and even American, has brought us into relationship with the outer world and has suggested comparisons between ancient and modern times. The experiences of the last four years have made history much more interesting to us and have made us eager to get a perspective of life and to find our place in it.

"Plans have already been begun for next year's work. Again with the generous aid of Mr. Rolfe the Seniors-to-be have already, as far as possible, chosen, from various groups of nations, some one which each finds interesting. The pupil himself is to assume that he is prime minister of the country and to make it his duty during the summer to become familiar with the history, political, social and economic, of the country which he has chosen. It is hoped that gradually a sort of web-of-life may in this way be woven in which each country shall stand out to our eyes in its unique position.

"Now, my friends, I have told you what is wanted by the rising generation, and how they have tried to get it; now I am going to tell you what more they expect. The young people want, first of all, reliable news from which they can obtain unbiased material. That means a reform in newspapers, and you older folks can help bring about that reform. Next, they want a place in the curriculum of the school for some study of current history. The greatest want is the co-operation of citizens. Just look at Concord, for instance, with all her learned and trained people, and see what they can do to help us if they are willing. We need and must have their co-operation. We, the rising generation, will have to make the resolution that we will, when we become town elders, co-operate to the best of our ability with the young people.

"There are grave dangers which may arise if our education in world affairs is neglected. The greatest danger likely to ensue

is that we shall be only half educated. To be half educated means to be self-centered, ignorant, disinclined to think, and all these faults are the works of an undesirable citizen. We do not want to be half educated, and we are trying our best not to be so."

The year of the presidential election was in some respects the most interesting and profitable year of the forum. The senior class always made itself more or less responsible for the material presented in the forum, and came to regard oral theme day as a rehearsal for the larger gathering. Talks to be given at the forum were seriously criticized by the class, and we all felt as if the welfare of the world depended on the truthfulness and accuracy of the students, and on the purity of the sources of their material. The class devoted two weeks to the study of the Covenant of the League of Nations. They were required to paraphrase it, and, having mastered its plan and objectives, they were given the standard arguments against it to consider. Finally they discussed in class the merits and defects of the League. Now, of course, they were ready to talk with outsiders, and they had many surprises. It was amusing to hear their reports. One girl argued with her father all night, and reported that she could come to no agreement with him.

Another, discussing the subject with a friend of her father, discovered that the gentleman was not sufficiently well informed to make discussion profitable. One boy, who worked in a store where newspapers were sold, found frequent opportunity to defend his opinions against business men who dropped in to get their papers. Another senior, who worked in a store, overheard a group of patrons discussing the League, and had, as he modestly said, "the privilege of helping them to correct their mistaken ideas."

Discussions in oral theme hour during this period of study were keen. Authorities and parties did not count, for the children agreed to respect their own powers of reasoning and in general brought no prejudices to their work, except when, now and then, a heart warm with sympathy for Ireland's woes was drawn to give too great weight to the possible consequences to Irish freedom of entering or remaining outside the League. Such a voice was permitted, but was answered by one of its own sort. The "smartness of debate" was discouraged; we were all trying to get the truth, not to confuse the issue.

Just before the presidential election, and after we had completed the study just described, the forum secured two outside



speakers, one for each of the two candidates for the presidency. Care was taken to select the speakers fairly. The audiences were large and enthusiastic, and each speaker was greeted, as might have been expected, with partisan applause. Dr. McDougall would have found in the points selected for favor by the untrained young Republicans and Democrats further evidence that America is not safe for democracy. At the close of the exercises, however, a group of seniors who had been studying the situation, gathered around me, and, referring to one of the speakers, said, "Mrs. Pulcifer, Mr. — did not get things right. He does not understand that," etc., etc. To them it was an experience for a lifetime. One of the boys who had studied the League Covenant now set at work secretly to examine the platform of the two main political parties (What unfruitful toil!) and made a summary of the difference which he noted. When I wondered at his zeal, he replied, "It is none too soon for a boy who is going to vote in eight years to find out what he ought to think."

Of each senior there is required near the end of the year a long theme supposed to tax his powers of thinking and to test his ability to select, digest, and arrange material. One of these themes I have in my possession, called *An Appeal and a Defense of the League of Nations*, written by one of the boys while he was at camp the summer following his study of the League, and when he was away from the usual sources of information. I wish I could insert the entire theme, but I give you two paragraphs, one from the introduction, the other from the conclusion.

Let us consider carefully how to study the League and what it really is. The fairest judgment is one taken from a study of the Covenant, in accordance with what your own, your very own, mind thinks, regardless of what any party stands for. Such a fair tribunal cannot be aided, before or after consideration of the League, by the usual politician; but an explanation of its purpose and objectives by a student uninfluenced by worldly prejudices, should be helpful to the common inhabitant of the world.

And the "student uninfluenced by worldly prejudices" proceeds to analyze and explain and defend with a boyish artlessness for the benefit of persons not influenced by the "usual politician."

If even now, you are so influenced by political, self-seeking mobs that you claim that the League is so full of imperfections that, even had the United States given its entire support, the League would have been doomed to eventual failure; remember that "not seldom has the sense of mankind decided against

itself," and the minority been in the right. It may be true that this League will fail, but that does not excuse anyone for the crime of voting against what he did not know; for some day the great ideal League is coming, and this may be only the Albany Conference of such a league, or it may be the Constitutional Convention of 1787; but, in either case, would you have the United States of America register its vote against civilization?"

It is only fair to state that not all the class reached the same conclusion that this lad reached, yet all experienced the difficulty and the importance of the process of making up their minds.

Our next undertaking, naturally a year later and with a new senior class, was a study of the Washington Conference. We approached it hopefully; in fact, I might say literally that we approached it prayerfully, as did everybody else. Two speakers from the town gave us talks in the forum; one on the occasion of the Conference, the other on the aims of the Conference. A third emphasized the value of participation and of publicity in such a meeting. The members of the class agreed with me to observe on November 11 the moment of silent prayer, and to record the specific object for which we had prayed—or hoped. For most of us the moment was an extended one. Little scraps of paper which were dropped on my desk at our first meeting after November 11 record these prayers:

Take all avarice and malice from the hearts of those assembled (at Washington) and fill them with tolerance and altruism. May the nations not learn war any more. May the people bowed with oppression, injustice, hunger and poverty be able to forget their sorrows in happier lives. May peace and good will reign on earth.

May an agreement be reached which makes it necessary for all countries to disarm to a great extent, and may the money be used to promote peace. I hope that the different representatives will be willing to give up their personal desires for the good of the world, and that they may find a way to rule the world in brotherhood.

May the members of the Conference forget their political differences and use righteousness and love.

During the Conference we kept in close touch with events through oral themes and the forum. One boy provided us with the Baltimore Sun, containing Dr. John Dewey's comments on the Far East. Others regularly read and reported articles from the Springfield Republican. The New York World gave us Mr. Wells's contributions. The Atlantic, the Century, the Literary Digest, the New Republic, the Outlook,



the Review of Reviews, and doughty little Current Events were within hand reach. The favorite family newspaper was useful, but never regarded as final authority.

After the Conference was over, each senior was required to write his report of its problems and accomplishment. No teacher of English need be ashamed of these reports, and one teacher is very proud of them. She is certain that if the statesmen at Washington could know how closely and eagerly children in America were watching them at their work, they might do that work with greater zeal. I have just reread one of the papers, and find myself astonished that the writer, a young girl, has so well digested the mass of material which a study of the Conference involves. I wish I could reproduce her whole paper. The surface is broken by little ripples of fun or of emotion, and by girlish comments, and the paper shows none of those marks of piecing which are so discouraging when material has been assembled but not planned. Much of the work handed in by pupils deserved the highest mark that we give; none fell below "Good." In fact, the best "long themes" ever produced in our department are those which have followed the study of great public events.

The third and last cross section of our effort to come to an understanding of the "good life" in connection with our English work is taken from last year's experience with a freshman class—usually the most unpromising division in English—the Mechanic Arts boys with a sprinkling of Domestic Arts girls to work confusion. The previous year I had made a failure of this section. Not in thirty years of teaching had I felt so utterly incompetent to interest a class. We stupidly struggled on together, and one of us was glad when the parting day arrived. There was almost nothing except Dr. Long's excellent fare of imitative sentences that they did with enthusiasm. The *Odyssey* was "a pack of lies"; *Treasure Island* a bore; the *Sketch Book* unendurable; nothing choicer than Zane Grey worth an eye, anyway. As to letter writing—"What's the use?" asked one. "I'm going to have a job in a garage next year, and I don't need to know how to write letters to keep it. No, I don't care whether I use good grammar or not." Such boys are "on their job," you see. This one was, to be sure, the most hopeless of his class, but there were several others nearly as indifferent. They simply "had no use" for English or any of its works. The hours were often spoiled for the few good students in the class by the lack of cooperation by these Philistines.

Next year came a new relay of the same section, and I felt almost ready to resign when I saw a few of the left-overs of the old class. It was cheering to find, however, that the domestic ladies had been removed to another sphere of influence. When the seniors began their study of the Washington Conference, I asked these little fellows how they would like to do the same sort of work that the seniors were doing. The idea caught them at once. Here was something real, and a more loyal little body of citizens would be hard to find.

At first their simple study was based on Current Events, to which nearly every member subscribed. As the weeks advanced, and the boys became more familiar with the international situation, they dipped into the magazines. Each boy brought clippings for his scrapbook; one contributed the Uncle Dudley editorials; another collected cartoons; another made pictures his specialty. We tried to find some definite and valuable contribution that each boy's family paper offered, and placed all the treasures at the disposal of the school library. It was very gratifying to these little fellows when the seniors found their scrapbooks useful. No eyes in America were more keenly fixed on the Washington Conference than those of IV M. lads. They were eager attendants at the forum, and were allowed to go when there was room for any freshmen. After a talk by Mr. Rolfe on the importance of publicity and of participation in a democracy, they began to feel that they had a real share in running the world. At Mr. Rolfe's suggestion they all wrote letters to Secretary Hughes. I insert, not the best of these, but one which happened to be too late to be sent with the rest:

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I go to the Concord High School. My name is James Harris. I am only a boy now, but in a few years I will be a citizen of the United States. We were asked by a certain man to write to you asking for publicity in the Arms Conference which is now being carried on; not only in this conference but in all national and public matters. Most newspapers do not always print the truth. Why not have a Government paper which would always print the truth? Pass laws which will always effect the newspapers to print the truth. Magazines also do not always tell the truth. They might also be looked after. Have a paper for the people, a paper which will stand by the people. Let publicity ring throughout the world. Then the government will be able to make national matters public.

Yours respectfully,

JAMES HARRIS.



Another lad soberly wrote in his letter, "I am trying to think of a way to save the world."

When any of the boys thought of a way in which the condition of their country or of the world could be improved, they were at liberty to write their suggestions on a slip of paper and to drop them in a drawer dedicated to the purpose. These are some of the suggestions:

"To take and put the money which they have in warships, and put it in a newspaper which would be true."

"By having all history tell the truth. The reason why they do not agree is that they do not tell the real truth."

"Make the reporters in newspapers sign their names to the articles, so if what they say is not true they can be punished."

"Help others as others help us."

"If we were the hope of the world, it would be much safer." This lad had read Hagedorn's book.

"I should think that if all the countries of the world should come together and unite, there would be no war and the world would be safer."

"Have a newspaper that will tell the truth and have the people behind it."

When we had gained some familiarity with the course of events, we tried publishing a newspaper of our own. It was mainly a simplified edition of Current Events, yet it gradually became more pretentious, and the more ambitious boys occasionally inserted what they called "boiled down" articles from the magazines.

The little editors took great delight in their work. One of the first group said to me, "How long am I going to be editor?"

"Until you learn the ropes."

"Then I'm never going to learn them," he said with determination.

Everybody in the class had his chance at being editor before the end of the year, and the dullest boy had his taste of planning and assigning duties to his fellows. I never found freshman "M's" so ready to undertake the dull work of correcting mistakes. It was a matter of great pride with them that the bulletin of weekly news which they put on the blackboard on Friday was left for the seniors to examine, and that the seniors thought well of it stimulated them to greater effort. When the bulletin was done, we all examined the work of each boy, criticizing or praising. Occasionally, when a specially good bit of work appeared, done by one of the slower boys, they would cry out, "Good for Francis!" or "Let's give Alfred a 'G' for that. He hasn't misspelled a single word"—

an impossible feat hitherto. At the end of the year they made a special copy of their paper for their good friend Mr. Rolfe. He wrote the little lads a letter of appreciation which filled them with pride and joy.

In June it is my practise to ask advice of a promoted class as to what to give or to omit with their successor. I regard as a precious document the following letter, written by one of the "left-over" boys. My heart had sunk in September when I saw him back.

I really have enjoyed this year much more than I did last year, because there was just boys, and last year we did not have our little paper. I really am proud as a cock in a hen yard when I think of IV M. Clips. It makes me think better and explain things more clearly. I advise you to start the little paper, because there are quite a few boys from West Acton who are just as much interested in the paper as I am, and I just enjoy that more than anything else besides my work in the shop.

Mrs. Pulcifer, I am beginning to like school more and more every day. I just hated to read last year, but since I have had the paper work, I enjoy reading more than anything else. Many times I take my Current Events and set in under a tree some place by myself and mark out the most important parts."

Other testimonials from freshmen are these:

When I read the newspaper, I used to get mixed up on the articles, but since we had them in class, I understand them.

I never used to read Current Events. Since we have had our paper, I read Current Events every time it comes.

I have learned to read articles with much more enthusiasm than before. I have also learned to reduce an article to brief form.

It helps me to read better, to understand better, and to think better. It is better to have this change every week than to have just plain, ordinary work."

This year I do not have these children any more. Yesterday one of the last year's "repeating" freshmen passed me on the stairs and said, "I see that the Bonus bill has passed the Senate and the House."

The next period I had a college division of the incoming senior class. Only one of them had any opinion on the Bonus, the Tariff, or on the Genoa Conference.

I am convinced that when children have once a week for four years done even the simple work that these freshmen have done, they will have the foundation for a better electorate—and will not have imperiled their chance of passing college examinations.



## THE TEACHER'S VOICE

Did we, as English teachers, during the recent celebration of Better Speech Week, pay adequate attention to the quality of our own voices? The musical quality of one's voice, while largely the gift of nature, is susceptible of wonderful development. We can so guard our breathing that there escapes only the amount of breath requisite for proper articulation. Unless the amount is kept in reserve the tones become breathy and produce the effect of strain—upon both speaker and listener. As listeners, we find ourselves swallowing frequently and breathing nervously out of sympathy for the ineffective speaker. Most of us, unfortunately, lack those compelling charms of Cleopatra, who, having lost her breath, spoke, and panted,—

That she did make defect perfection,  
And, breathless, power breathe forth.

Musical quality may likewise be developed by rounding the tones instead of smothering them by close confinement. If we associate with cultured people most of this improvement is made unconsciously. We thus learn by imitation to prevent the harsh and nasal tones from dominating. By bringing our nature under firm control and by cultivating calmness of temperament we shall quickly accentuate the improvement. We must remember that almost any one can make his discordant tone resonant and agreeable, but emphasis upon this improvement most wisely falls upon the period of youth when habits are forming and when the vocal organs are more easily brought under obedience.

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